

VZCZCXRO1502
PP RUEHBC RUEHDA RUEHDE RUEHDH RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #1480/01 1561134
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 051134Z JUN 09
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3355
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 001480

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

NEA/I FOR WVEEMS

E.O.12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [AMGT](#) [EAID](#) [EAGR](#) [SOCI](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: MAY 2009 PRT TEAM LEADERS CONFERENCE: SECURITY, STABILITY,
AND CERP

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED - HANDLE ACCORDINGLY

¶1. (U) Summary: On May 26-27, Embassy Baghdad's Office of Provincial Affairs (OPA) hosted its quarterly conference for leaders of the Iraq Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). All PRTs, embedded Provincial Reconstruction Teams (ePRTs) and Regional Embassy Offices (REOs) participated, including the Coalition team led by the Italians. The conference centered on guidance from the Administration and senior civilian and military leadership leaders, and the announcement of unexpected availability of CERP funds for the remainder of the year. End Summary.

NEW ADMINISTRATION, NEW GUIDANCE

¶2. (SBU) Provincial Reconstruction Teams are "the vehicle by which [the United States] can engage the Iraqi people" and are "pulling more than their fair share" of the reconstruction burden," Ambassador Christopher Hill told PRT leaders May 26. The American people have been shouldering a large budget burden, and Iraqis should take more responsibility. The PRTs will continue to play an important role as Coalition Forces draw down, and it is imperative for USG personnel working in Iraq to show American audiences at home our successes here.

¶3. (SBU) The Ambassador reiterated White House guidance that the present configuration of 23 PRTs and embedded PRTs will remain until after the Iraqi national election slated for early 2010. Following the election, and coupled with the planned troop drawdown from 135,000 to 50,000, PRTs would go from 23 to 16 in August 2010 then to 6 teams by December 2011. As PRTs depart some provinces, ways will be found to maintain the reach of the remaining teams.

VIEWS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

¶4. (SBU) United Nations Special Representative for the Secretary-General (SRSG) Staffan de Mistura praised the strong relationship between UN Assistance Mission Iraq (UNAMI) and the PRTs. He called the PRT program a "great success" which provided the UN with the platform to extend its own reach.

¶5. (SBU) The UN's three priorities for Iraq this year will be easing Kurd-Arab tensions, supporting national elections, and continuing capacity building efforts in Iraq. SRSG warned that conflict between Kurds and Arabs was the most dangerous issue facing Iraq, and went on to discuss UN efforts to diffuse the ethnic tension through the recent release of the Disputed Internal Boundaries (DIBs) reports. He affirmed the UN's commitment to support the national elections process, praising the partnership with the PRTs and military in support of elections. Finally, he pledged UN support for continued capacity-building.

¶6. (SBU) Italian Ambassador to Iraq Maurizio Melani spoke on lessons

learned from the original Afghanistan PRTs from which the Iraq PRT program developed. These lessons included recognizing the importance of civilian leadership of the PRTs, focusing on host country capacity building, developing the PRTs role as catalysts for international support, and publicizing PRT efforts for audiences back home.

¶7. (SBU) World Health Organization Representative Dr. Naeema al-Gasser discussed past successes and future plans for development assistance in Iraq. She spoke of increased UN engagement and incremental expansion into UN priority program areas of governance and public sector modernization, economic growth and restructuring, and internally displaced persons. She emphasized the need to coordinate and partner with OPA, MNF-I, USAID, and other groups to draw on each others' successes and work towards the objectives of the International Compact for Iraq and the Paris Agreement.

MNF-I AND MNC-I INVITE CERP PROPOSALS, PLEDGE SUPPORT

¶8. (SBU) Multi National Force Iraq (MNF-I) Commanding General Raymond Odierno framed his presentation around President Obama's three objectives for Iraq: supporting development of a sovereign, stable, and self-reliant Iraq; ensuring the government of Iraq is representative and accountable; and building a U.S.-Iraq partnership that contributes to peace and stability in the region. To achieve these goals and maintain current momentum in Iraq, the military is planning a responsible drawdown.

¶9. (SBU) General Odierno noted that the Iraqi military, especially
BAGHDAD 00001480 002 OF 003

the latest generation of General officers, seem less tied to political or sectarian parties. He emphasized the importance of establishing rule of law in Iraq and of encouraging Iraqis to solve their problems through political means instead of violence. Withdrawing U.S. troops from the cities in accordance with the June 30 deadline set by the Security Agreement was imperative to demonstrate U.S. commitment to honoring the agreement.

¶10. (SBU) Stressing unity of effort in civil capacity building, General Odierno said he saw the State Department and PRTs in the lead with support from the military. With some \$560 million becoming available in CERP funds for the remainder of FY 2009, he invited the PRTs to submit project proposals in coordination with brigades and with Provincial Councils.

¶11. (SBU) Recently-arrived Commander of Multi-National Corps Iraq (MNC-I) Lieutenant General (LTG) Charles Jacoby made an unscheduled but welcome appearance at the conference. He pointed to the June 30 deadline for U.S. combat troops to withdraw from Iraqi cities as critical for affirming the perception that the U.S. military is adhering to the Security Agreement. National elections in January will be a second decisive event; the Iraqi people are hungry for a representative government that can effectively deliver services. A third decisive point will be responsible drawdown and transition from military combat units to Advise and Assist Brigades (AABs). Pledging full support to the PRT program, Jacoby underscored the importance of balancing short-term security objectives with long-term capacity building, especially considering limited time and resources available.

CHANGE IN OPA LEADERSHIP

¶12. (SBU) Outgoing OPA Director Phyllis Powers introduced incoming Director Greta Holtz, and paid special tribute to the Team Leaders, crediting progress -- in the face of often ambiguous guidance -- to their leadership and hard work. There is no handbook per se on how to develop or run a PRT but Team Leaders are writing the book as they work.

¶13. (SBU) Incoming OPA Director Greta Holtz aligned her vision for the PRTs with those of the President, the Ambassador and the Commanding General. Committing to focus on ensuring adequate resources for the PRTs during the military drawdown, she encouraged Team Leaders to be proactive in identifying their operational needs. Her focus will be on ensuring that the civilian footprint across Iraq is structured and supported by the military and Department of State to have the maximum effect on helping achieve U.S. strategic goals between now and 2011. Ms. Holtz tasked the PRT leaders with assessing the "unofficial" support not covered by the MOU that the PRTs get from their brigades and other military partners, so as the military draws down, Department of State and Department of Defense leadership will know what resources are needed to keep a robust civilian presence across the country.

ADDITIONAL CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

¶14. (SBU) Representatives from Baghdad PRT, together with partners from Multinational Division--Baghdad and the office of the Deputy Mayor of Baghdad, gave a timely presentation on their Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) process which governs all BCT and PRT-initiated public works projects in Baghdad. The MOU addresses problems including an unwieldy number of contractors, limited quality assurance and control, and operation and maintenance once projects are turned over to the Government of Iraq. The MOA document will require projects to be approved by Baghdad City Hall prior to breaking ground.

¶15. (SBU) Agriculture (USDA) Attach Fred Kessel urged PRTs to rethink their strategies and to enable Iraqis to take ownership of their agricultural development. Kessel cited numerous examples of how U.S.-introduced agricultural projects failed because local conditions were not considered and local knowledge was not solicited. Better to involve local agricultural advisory associations, he counseled.

¶16. (SBU) Embassy Baghdad Coordinator for Economic Transition in Iraq (CETI) Ambassador Marc Wall led a panel discussion on the Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA), along with John Fox, Deputy Political Counselor for Provincial Affairs, and Susan Ziadeh, Acting Public Affairs Counselor. The SFA provides the structure for normal bilateral relations with Iraq, especially in economic, cultural and political endeavors. Wall noted the need for the Government of Iraq to ratify long-term bilateral agreements, stalled since 2005, in order to enhance economic cooperation and development. Although the

BAGHDAD 00001480 003 OF 003

PRTs are not directly affected by the SFA, they are key implementers - e.g., identifying candidates for the Embassy's numerous cultural and educational exchanges.

¶17. (U) Other sessions included a presentation by the Transportation Attach, a discussion of operational concerns with OPA, RSO, and Embassy management officers, and a briefing from the Office of Hostage Affairs.

FORD